

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MASS TH US
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK REQUESTS F-16 AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 101739

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK HAS EXPRESSED TO CHARGE
THE SERIOUS DESIRE OF THE RTG TO PURCHASE A SMALL NUMBER OF F-16
AIRCRAFT DESPITE THE COST AND THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH LED TO THE
DENIAL OF P&B INFORMATION (REFTEL). MISSION BELIEVES ISSUE COULD
BECOME IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS AND PROPOSES WE PROVIDE P&B
WITH CAVEAT THAT PRESENT POLICY PROHIBITS SALES IN NEAR FUTURE AND TH
AT
EARLIEST DELIVERY, EVEN SHOULD A DEMONSTRATED NEED ARISE, WOULD BE
WELL INTO THE 1980'S. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK IN HIS ROLE AS SUPREME COMMANDER
ATTENDED JUNE 21 LUNCH GIVEN BY SENIOR JUSMAG OFFICERS. CHARGE AND
SEVERAL SENIOR THAI MILITARY OFFICERS ALSO ATTENDED.

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3. LUNCHEON WAS SOCIAL OCCASION BUT DURING COURSE OF THE MEAL,
KRIANGSAK TOOK OCCASION TO CONVEY IN SERIOUS VEIN HIS GOVERNMENT'S
INTENTION TO PROCURE SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT, IF NOT FROM
THE
U.S., FROM OTHER SOURCES. KRIANGSAK INDICATED THAT THE
THAI MILITARY HAD TO DEMONSTRATE TO ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS WHAT
IT TOO HAD ACCESS TO MODERN EQUIPMENT. HE ALSO INDICATED HIS CONCERN

AT

SHOWING YOUNGER THAI MILITARY OFFICERS THAT THAILAND HAS SOME OF THE MOST MODERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE. KRIANGSAK SAID THAT IN EVENT USG DID NOT WISH TO SELL EQUIPMENT WHICH RTG BELIEVES IT NEEDS, THE THAI WOULD HAVE TO PROCEED TO OTHER FOREIGN PROCUREMENT SOURCES.

4. IN ABOVE CONTEXT, KRIANGSAK RAISED SPECIFICALLY QUESTION OF F-16'S FOR THAILAND. KRIANGSAK STRESSED THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE HE GAVE TO PROCUREMENT OF "AT LEAST THREE OR FOUR F-16'S." KRIANGSAK SAID THAT WITH THE MODERN AIRCRAFT POSSESSED BY HIS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS, IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR MORALE OF THE THAI PEOPLE AND THAI MILITARY THAT RTG HAVE AT LEAST A FEW F-16 AIRCRAFT.

5. IN ADDITION TO POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, AMERICANS PRESENT INDICATED OUR CONCERNS ABOUT TECHNICAL SOPHISTICATION AND COST OF THE F-16

AS WELL AS INAPPLICABILITY OF SUCH AN AIRCRAFT TO THAILAND'S NEEDS. KRIANGSAK POLITELY BUT CATEGORICALLY DISMISSED COST ARGUMENT, STATING THAT THIS WAS THAILAND'S CONCERN, AND INDICATED THAT RTG VIEWED PROCUREMENT OF F-16'S OF SUCH IMPORTANCE THAT PRICE WAS NOT A FACTOR. HE DID NOT RPT NOT CHALLENGE OTHER POINTS

WE MADE BUT CLEARLY DID NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT OUR VIEWS. RATHER, KRIANGSAK REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE HE PUT ON GETTING THESE AIRCRAFT, CONFIDENTIAL

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PLACING ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR BASIC MILITARY PROCUREMENT RELATIONSHIP.

6. WE HAD PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED FROM SENIOR THAI MILITARY OFFICERS SIGNALS OF UNHAPPINESS OVER OUR REFUSAL TO PROVIDE P&B INFORMATION ON F-16. THE ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE (RTAF) HAS CLEARLY CONVINCED KRIANGSAK OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING SOPHISTICATED NEW AIRCRAFT DESPITE OUR REPEATED EXPLANATIONS OF BOTH USG POLICY AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH HAVE LED US TO DENY P&B INFORMATION. HOWEVER, KRIANGSAK AND SENIOR RTAF AT ALL LEVELS ARE NOW EXERTING INCREASING PRESSURE FOR USG RECONSIDERATION OF OUR DECISION.

7. IN ADDITION TO VALID BROADER POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AGAINST SALE OF THIS AIRCRAFT TO THAILAND, EMBASSY/JUSMAG SEE NO OPERATIONAL NEED FOR F-16S AT THIS TIME. FURTHER, GIVEN COMPLEXITY OF THE AIRCRAFT, WE DOUBT SERIOUSLY WHETHER THAI WOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN IT WITHOUT U.S. PERSONNEL ASSISTANCE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE FACING DIFFICULT AND ABRASIVE ISSUE IN OUR RELATION - SHIPS WITH KRIANGSAK AND THAI MILITARY ON THIS MATTER.

8. WOULD, THEREFORE, HOPE THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES COULD CONSIDER

AN APPROACH ALONG FOLLOWING LINES WHICH WOULD BE LESS DAMAGING TO KRIANGSAK'S PERSONAL PRESTIGE. WE WOULD PROPOSE THAT, AS WE HAD ORIGINALLY SUGGESTED, USG AGREE TO PROVIDE P&B INFORMATION WITH CAVEAT THAT UNDER PRESENT POLICY GUIDELINES WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROCEED TO SALE IN NEAR FUTURE. HOWEVER, WE COULD ALSO HOLD OUR POSSIBILITY OF REASSESSING OUR POSITION OVER THE NEXT YEARS IN EVENT THERE IS A DEMONSTRATED THAI NEED FOR SUCH AN AIRCRAFT. WE COULD ALSO INDICATE THAT IN ANY EVENT F-16S WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR PROCUREMENT UNTIL WELL INTO THE 1980'S AND PERHAPS NOT EVEN THEN, DUE TO NEEDS OF USAF. ABOVE WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE A VERY SATISFACTORY REPLY TO THAI. HOWEVER, IT WOULD AT LEAST DEMONSTRATE AN ATTEMPT ON OUR PART TO BE RESPONSIVE TO KRIANGSAK'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION. THIS APPROACH WOULD ALSO ALLOW US TO ENGAGE IN A LONGER TERM DIALOGUE IN

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WHICH WE WOULD CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO DEFLECT THE RTAF INTEREST IN PROCUREMENT OF SUCH SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT.

9. FOR CINCPAC: ALTHOUGH IN DISCUSSION WITH CINCPAC, PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK REFERRED TO "F-15'S." LATER DISCUSSIONS WITH THAI MILITARY AND KRIANGSAK HIMSELF INDICATE THAT HE HAD IN FACT MEANT F-16'S.

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